

GUIDE

TO

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

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No. 1.

For the Guide to Christian Perfection.

PRINCIPLES OF THE INTERIOR OR HIDDEN LIFE.

No. XXIII.

ON PATIENTLY BEARING THE DEFECTS OF OTHERS.

There are but few practical directions which are more important to those who profess sanctification, than the direction that we should bear with entire meekness and patience the infirmities and defects of others. The adoption of any other principle necessarily involves us in continual disquietudes and troubles.

We should bear with patience the infirmities of others, in the FIRST place, because, in their results to ourselves, they evidently tend to our own purification. It is very clearly a part of God's spiritual economy to purify his people by means of the various crosses which he lays upon them. We are not at liberty to make crosses for ourselves, but are cheerfully and quietly to meet and endure them, when they come upon us in the divine providence. Now, the infirmities of men, the many and trying infirmities of all around us, are a cross which the divine providence lays at our feet at every step of our progress in the path of life. To be obliged to meet and to bear these infirmities is an affliction, oftentimes a heavy affliction. But it has a purifying power. It strikes a blow at self love. It makes us better.

We should bear the infirmities of others meekly and patiently, because, in the SECOND place, to meet them in any other way is only to increase, instead of diminishing our affliction. To permit ourselves to be unduly disquieted and troubled, is to add interior affliction to that which is external; and that, too, with much injury in other respects, without any compensating gain. The indulgence of a fretful and repining spirit, whether it result from the infirmities of others or from any other cause, tends to weaken faith, to

harden the heart, and effectually to separate us from God. On the contrary, he who manfully bears this cross, heavy as it sometimes is, experiences an internal support and blessing which is exceedingly consoling, and which truly makes the yoke of this temptation easy, and its burden light.

In the **THIRD** place, it is the will of God that we should thus be afflicted. "In the world," says the Savior, "ye shall have tribulation." And one of the forms of affliction to which we are subject here, is the grief which we frequently and necessarily experience in connection with the imperfections of our fellow men. He is willing that we should in this way be reminded of our fallen condition, and he sees it also to be for our good. As there is nothing so desirable and glorious as being perfectly in the will of God, we ought to be not only resigned but happy in experiencing an affliction which comes from the hand of Him who doeth all things well. It will aid us in some degree if we always remember, (which is sometimes not the case,) that afflictions which come through others, such as jealousies, misrepresentations, and various human persecutions, are as much afflictions sent upon us from our heavenly Father, as the physical trials to which we are subject. I have frequently experienced the practical benefit of this important truth. When, as I supposed, I had been misrepresented and injured by others, as soon as I connected with this unpleasant experience the idea that the hand of God was in it, I found a sweet peace and resignation pervading the mind, which made even suffering delightful. And what was not the least beneficial result of this important view, it enabled me at once to exercise the most kindly and Christian feelings towards those who had been the wicked instruments of my suffering. Thus should the mind, in suffering as well as in joy, and in all kinds of suffering as well as all kinds of joy, soar above the creatures, and connect itself with God.

FOURTH. I would observe, further, that these remarks apply to the afflictions we endure from the infirmities of those who are sanctified, as well as to afflictions from other sources. Holy persons may at times entertain peculiar views with which we cannot fully sympathize, and may occasionally exhibit, notwithstanding the purity and love of their hearts, imperfections of judgment and of outward manner which are exceedingly trying even to "those of the like precious faith." We naturally expect much more from these persons than from others; and hence the keenness of our sorrow if, notwithstanding their exemption from voluntary sin, there is not an obvious perfection of judgment, of expression, and of manner. But we must learn to bear with trials from this source also, always remembering, although we humbly hope there are instances of perfect love on earth, that absolute perfection exists only in heaven. Unless we adopt this view, and act upon it, we shall be apt unnecessarily to distrust the profession and hopes of others, which would be a great evil to ourselves and to them.

A. K.

For the Guide to Christian Perfection.

BR. KING,—I have been much interested in some parts of a work entitled “Spiritual Consolation, or a Treatise on Interior Peace,” translated from the French of Pere Lombez. I send you a short extract for the Guide, if you think it worthy of insertion.

P. L. U.

ON CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

“The love of God necessarily produces the virtue of submission of will to all the dispensations of Providence. This submission tends to preserve the peace of the soul amidst every variety of painful reverse, and ensures an admirable tranquillity and equanimity of spirit in the violent commotions and afflicting vicissitudes that chequer and distract the scene of life. If we really love God, we shall desire nothing but as he desires it; and having no other will than his, those events in themselves most calculated to afflict us, will no longer be opposed to our will, because we know that every thing that happens on earth is either ordained or permitted of God. How happy is the man who thus maintains a strict union with that sovereign, all ruling Providence which preserves, governs and regulates all things, who wills what God wills, and nothing more, and thereby enjoys a certainty of always possessing whatever he desires, and suffering nothing he is not willing to suffer; and who thereby becomes, in some measure, the arbiter of his own destiny! How great is the dignity, how perfect the peace of such a disposition! But how wonderful also are its consequences; for the soul who has thus substituted the divine will for her own, always does her will by never seeking to do it. By complete forgetfulness of self and her own interests, she insures the security of both; and she does so with as much sanctity and perfection as had marked her abandonment to the providence of God. In a word, she finds herself and all things else in God, because she had forgotten all things, and herself included, for God.

O what peace do they not enjoy in the bosom of their Creator! I do not speak here to their ardent love for the cross, arising from their love of Jesus Christ, who was fastened to it. I say nothing of their holy transport in the midst of tribulations, mingled, however, with that salutary distrust of themselves which proceeds from their conviction of the value of suffering, and the extent of their weakness. I pass over their gratitude, yet cautious reserve in prosperity, believing it to be sent as a necessary but dangerous indulgence to their little virtue. I allude only to

the profound calm they enjoy, under the eye of a God who sees all things, under the dominion of a God who can do all things, and who governs all things with absolute authority; above all, in the bosom of a God whose love inclines him to will all things that can conduce to their greater good; but their tranquil rest is far above all that can be conceived; it is heavenly; an attempt to describe it would be in vain. We must be satisfied in admiring, in respectful silence, the sublime operations of grace within their souls, and those prodigies of grace and virtue exhibited in the doctrine and conduct of all the saints,—prodigies which good angels watch with jealous care, and evil spirits look on with malicious envy, which the impious blaspheme, but the just of every age zealously labor to imitate.”

For the Guide to Christian Perfection.

THE DOCTRINE OF HOLINESS.

DEAR BR. KING,—Owing to various and pressing duties during the last few months, I have been unable to write any thing for the Guide. It is with much pleasure that I now embrace an opportunity of penning a few thoughts on the doctrine of Christian perfection, to the advocating of which, the Guide is principally devoted.

The doctrine of holiness, or Christian perfection, is one that lies near to my heart. It is the star of hope that has shined upon the gloomy despair of this sin ruined world. In order to know what this great salvation is, and rightly to appreciate its value, it seems to me, that we need to know the character and condition of those for whom it is provided; and also the amount of sacrifice that was made by its divine author in procuring it for us. Hence I propose, first, to show the character and condition of those for whom salvation is provided, and to whom it is offered. I suppose it will be admitted by all who may read this article, that *sin* is directly the opposite of *holiness*. The Bible defines sin to be a *transgression* of the law, and if holiness be the opposite of sin, it must be *obedience* to the law.

I wish to say here, that when I use the terms holiness, entire sanctification, Christian perfection, or perfect love, I mean, as I suppose the Bible means, always the same thing. I think it will not be denied, that those to whom the gospel of eternal life has

been sent, are transgressors of God's holy law. The adversary of souls, the enemy of all righteousness, has succeeded in drawing the whole human family into his destructive snare. He has blotted the moral image of our Creator from the heart of every son and daughter of Adam. As the omniscient eye of God looks abroad on the children of men, he sees that they all have sinned and come short of his glory. No fact is more fully and plainly taught by observation and revelation, than that men have universally sinned against God. When we look into society, and see the manner in which men deal with each other in the transaction of their business—when we look into families, and see the spirit that is breathed there, and when we look into the heart, and see the movings of that fountain of character, it is manifest to all, that love, which worketh no ill to its neighbor, is not the constraining power which moves the mass of active minds. That charity which suffereth long and is kind, does not soften and sweeten all the intercourse of the family circle. That benevolence which seeketh not her own but another's good, is a stranger to the human heart, while in a state of nature.

Sin is not only universal among our fallen race, but it seems to pervade their entire moral being. The testimony of scripture is, "That God saw the wickedness of man that it was *great* in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of the heart, was *only* evil continually." "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips." Such beings must be as destitute of holiness, as Egyptian darkness was destitute of light. True, there may be left some lineaments of physical and intellectual greatness, to indicate the power and wisdom of that hand which formed us; but that pure image, for the reflection of which man was created, has been entirely blotted from the tablet of the human heart.

The gospel of salvation not only finds men morally defiled, but also in a state of condemnation. "The wrath of God abideth on them." That peace which flows like a river in a pure heart, a soul that is in sin experiences not. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." "Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, is upon *every* soul that sinneth." O, the anguish that an unconverted sinner experiences, when conscious of his guilt, feeling himself under the searching eye of a holy God, and looking forward to eternity, where the full penalty of God's law will be inflicted on those who have not been justified by faith, and cleansed by the blood of Christ from all unrighteous-

ness! Reader, have you not felt the anguish of condemnation in your own soul? And under its blighting power, have you not almost panted for a grave of annihilation, in which you might lie down in an eternal sleep?

Those for whom this great work is provided, are not only guilty and condemned, but they are perfectly helpless. They are willing slaves to sin. The strong man armed has them completely in his power. Their guilt with a mountain weight is crushing them to the depths of eternal despair. When in their own strength they struggle long and hard to break their slavish chains, and throw off their crushing load, they learn the utter weakness of their own strength, the folly of their own wisdom, and the worthlessness of their own righteousness, and they are ready to cry out; "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" All this condemnation, wretchedness and helplessness are the natural result of sin. And such are the character and condition of the whole family of man while destitute of that salvation, which has been revealed by the gospel of God's dear Son. We may truly say, that

"Buried in sorrow and in sin,
At hell's dark door we lay."

But blessed be God, we are not left to lie down in eternal despair! Salvation from sin and from its eternal consequences, is provided and offered to us as freely as the air that we breathe. May every reader know its power in his own soul, taste its sweetness, and enjoy its eternal blessedness!

The Lord willing, I will show in my next the sacrifice that has been made to procure this salvation for us, and I will then pass to its nature, and experience in the soul.

Yours in Christian love,

W. P. R.

Offer yourself to God for life or death, for ease or pain, for strength or weakness. Let him choose and refuse for you; only do you choose him for your present and eternal portion. I want you to be a little bolder in venturing upon the bosom of our Lord. We lose, (I for one,) much sweetness and many degrees of holiness in being shy of the Friend, the loving Friend of sinners.—
Fletcher.

"THE WAY OF HOLINESS."

SECTION VII.

"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."—*The Prayer of Jesus for his Disciples.*

"'Tis done! thou dost this moment save,
With full salvation bless;
Redemption through thy blood I have,
And spotless love and peace."

Now that she was so powerfully and experimentally assured of the blessedness of this "shorter way," O, with what ardor of soul did she long to say to every redeemed one, "Ye have been fully redeemed; redeemed from all iniquity, that ye should be unto God a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

So reasonable did it appear that *all the Lord's ransomed ones*, who had been so fully redeemed, and *chosen out of the world*, should be *sanctified*, set apart for holy service, as chosen vessels unto God, to bear his hallowed name before a gainsaying world, by having the seal legibly enstamped upon the forehead, proclaiming them as "not of the world," a "peculiar people to show forth his praise; that all the energies of her mind were now absorbed in the desire to communicate the living intensity of her soul on this subject to the heart of every professed disciple.

The ardor of her now newly inspired spirit could scarcely conceive of a higher ambition, in the present state of existence, than to be endued with the unction of the Holy One, and then permitted, by the power of the Spirit, to say to every lover of Jesus, "This is the will of God, even *your* sanctification." Jesus, *your* Redeemer, *your* Savior, waits even now to sanctify you wholly; and I pray God that your *whole spirit*, and *soul*, and *body*, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

It was in that same hallowed hour when she was first, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, permitted to enter within the veil, and *prove* the blessedness of the "way of holiness," that the momentous responsibilities and also inconceivably glorious destination of the believer were unfolded to her spiritual vision, in a manner inexpressibly surpassing her former perceptions. She seemed permitted to look down through the vista of the future, to behold herself as having begun a race in a way lumi-

nously lit up by the rays of the Sun of Righteousness, with the gaze of myriads of interested spectators, ay, even the gaze of the upper, as also the lower world, intensely fixed, watching her progress in a course that seemed to admit of no respite, or turning to the right or to the left, and where consequences inconceivably momentous and eternal in duration, were pending.

Have you brought yourself into this state of blessedness? Is it through your own exertions that this light has been lit up in your heart?—were now inquiries that were urged upon her attention. She deeply felt, as her heart responded to these interrogatories, that it was *all* the work of the Spirit; and never before did such a piercing sense of her own demerit and helplessness penetrate her soul as at that hour, as her inmost soul replied, 'Tis from the "Father of lights," the "Giver of every good and perfect gift," that I have received this precious *gift*. Yes, it is a *gift* from God, and to his name be all the glory!

The Spirit then suggested, *If it is a gift from God*, God is not exclusive in the impartation of his gifts, and you will be required to declare it; to declare it as his gift, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and ready for the acceptance of all as his free gift; and this, if you would retain the blessing, will not be left at your own disposal. You will be called to profess this blessing before thousands. Can you do it? And here she was permitted again to count the cost. She had been saying, rather let me die than lose the blessing, for Satan had suggested that she would ever be vacillating in her experience; one day professing the blessing, and another not; that she was so constitutionally prone to reason, it would require an *extraordinary* miracle to sustain her amid such a variety of unpropitious circumstances, which, as a mighty phalanx, crowded before the vision of her mind; but the Spirit brought to her remembrance the continuous miracle of the Israelitish nation fed daily with bread directly from heaven. And though assured that a miracle equal in magnitude would be continuously requisite for her sustainment, yet she gloried in the assurance that the same Almighty power stood continuously pledged for its performance. And now that she was called to count the cost of coming out in the profession of this blessing before thousands, the enemy directed her mind most powerfully to what her former failures had been in reference to making confession with the mouth.

In few duties had she more frequently brought condemnation on her soul than in this; and the suggestion from the adversary, that a failure in this requirement was precisely the ground on which she should lose the blessing, assumed more plausibility

than former temptations. But the Spirit raised up a standard ; and as a co-worker with God, she was enabled to resolve the subject in such a manner that the onward pilgrimage of more than five succeeding years has tested the happy consequences of the decision, and proved that it was indeed the Spirit of the Lord that raised the standard — the Spirit that taught.

The matter was decided thus : Some settled principles must be established in the soul, by which it may be known what shall constitute duty in reference to this subject. Duty must be determined by a reference to the requirements of the Word ; and being settled thus, the voice of duty is literally the *voice of God to the soul*. She was then enabled to decide the matter in reference to testifying of the work of the Spirit thus : The church is represented as Christ's body. I am one of the members of that body. If I, by testifying of his Spirit's operation on my heart, am individually benefitted, the whole body is advantaged, by a more healthy action being produced throughout, which, by the disaffection of one member, might be materially injured, and this in reference to *myself*, as well as also the *whole body*, would *constitute duty*, and thus if any other member or members should be benefitted, in the same ratio. The inquiry rose, But am I by my own power of reasoning to determine in matters so momentous ? The answer was, If you have power to reason above an idiot, or the beasts that perish, God has given that power ; it is a talent entrusted, for which you will be called to render an account of stewardship. *Natural* abilities are as truly *gifts from God* as those termed by men *gracious* abilities. Grace does not render in any degree useless natural endowments, but only turns them into a *sanctified* channel.

Having received, through these gracious communications, more enlightened and confirmed views in reference to duty, and assured that the voice of duty was in verity the voice of God to the soul, she was enabled to resolve, that however formidable the circumstances were, if it literally cost life in the effort to go forward, she would still proceed, though a martyr to the cause ; that it should be enough that the Almighty had said, "Go forward." On coming to this point, a yet more glorious increase of light burst upon her way ! The Spirit brought to her remembrance the words she had most solemnly uttered but a few moments previous, when, making the sacred dedication of all her powers for ever to God, she had used the dedicatory words of David, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit, for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." She had *realized* and acknowledged the offering accepted. And now the Spirit said, Had your spirit

actually left the body, and mingled with the spirits before the throne, when you thus solemnly committed it into the hands of God; and had the Father of spirits permitted you to return and again actuate that body, for the special purpose of declaring before thousands that Jesus is a full Savior, able to save unto the uttermost, could you do it?

She thought of the blood-washed spirits surrounding in waiting attitude the eternal throne, and, from a newly received affinity of feeling, began to conjecture their burning ardor, as messengers of love, to communicate tidings of grace to whatever sphere commissioned. She thought of one commissioned to earth with a special embassy, charged to communicate it to the greatest possible number of earth's inhabitants; conjectured the zeal that would be manifested in giving publicity to the tidings, the expedients used, the ideas of his auditors relative to the importance of his mission, their probable indifference, perhaps contumely and scorn, pronounced over zealous, carrying matters too far, perchance fanatic, or monomaniac, might be the epithets that might serve to distinguish him from the mass of mankind, and be the reward of his labors of love, during the performance of his earthly mission.

Yet the thought of the manner in which these considerations would affect him, the various motives that would call forth his commiseration, the little weight that a contemptuous reception of his message would have on his personal feelings, only as far as the honor of his Sovereign was concerned, his slight associations and attachments to earth, other than as the scene for the completion of his work, his thoughts of heaven, as the centre of his operations, the *home* of his heart, his *native* country, &c., all tended to instruct and admonish.

It was now that the Scriptural meaning of the words, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly," "body, soul and spirit," "thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven," "ye are not of the world, I have chosen you out of the world," "redeemed from all iniquity," "a *peculiar* people," "strangers," "pilgrims," "sojourners," "fellow citizens with the saints in light," &c., communicated torrent after torrent of light upon the peculiar nature, responsibilities, and infinite blessedness of the way upon which she had newly entered. And in answer to the inquiry, Can you declare this great salvation to others? her heart responded, Yea, Lord, to an assembled world at once, if it be at thy bidding. Only "arm me with thy Spirit's might." "Into thy hands I commit my spirit;" let it but actuate this body for the performance of thy good will and pleasure in all things, and

if at any time thou seest me about to depart from thee, cut short the work in righteousness, and take me home to thyself.

"'Tis done! the great transaction's done,
I am my Lord's, and he is mine;
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine.

"Now rest, my long divided heart,
Fixed on this blissful centre rest,
Nor ever from thy Lord depart,
With him of every good possessed."

THERE IS BUT ONE WAY.

SECTION VIII.

"Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth."

Light from the eternal hills!
Thou lamp of life divine!
River of God; of many rills,
Reaching to all mankind.

Laden with precious freight,
Fresh from the courts above,
Alike to all, both small and great,
Thine embassy of love.

Gold were a thing of nought,
Rubies of priceless worth,
Compared with treasures thou hast brought
To fallen sons of earth.

O how precious, precious beyond all computation, was the blessed word of God now to her soul. She had valued it before, but now, as she retraced the way by which the Lord had brought her, she saw that each progressive step had been distinctly marked by a reference to its requirements.

Though often greatly advantaged by the recital of experience of fellow travellers to the heavenly city, so much so that she greatly loved the assembling of themselves together, yet she found, on looking back, that former perplexities in experience had too frequently arisen from a proneness to follow the traditions of men, instead of the oracles of God.

She now found that "*there is but one way*," and this way far better, and "*shorter*" also, by bringing every diversified state of experience, however specious or complex, to compare with the "law and the testimony;"—and if not *according to these*, became assured that it was because the true light had not shined there. From this period it became an immovable axiom with her, never to deem an experience satisfactory that could not be substantiated with an emphatic, "*Thus saith the Lord.*"

On getting into "the way of holiness," she found that much clearer light beamed upon her path. Never in former experience did she so sweetly apprehend the truth of the words, "Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thy everlasting light." "And the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

It was while walking in this light that the subtilty, maliciousness, and power of the arch deceiver became much more apparent, and would have become much more a matter of dread, were it not that by the same light she also discovered, with the prophet's servant, when his eyes were opened, that more were they that were for her than all that were against her. And then the knowledge that she was, in experimental verity, *resting upon Christ*, the anointed of God, imparted such an increase of holy energy, realizing, as she did momentarily, that virtue came out of Jesus, her Savior and Redeemer, for the full supply of all her wants, under every variety of circumstance, that she was indeed enabled to obey the command, "Rejoice evermore." And then she became so divinely assured also that the "trial of her faith was precious," that it was not hard to "glory in tribulation."

Her perceptions of the absolute need of the atonement were never so vivid as while journeying onward in this way. She felt that she could not take one progressive step, or for one moment present an acceptable sacrifice, but through the merits of her Savior. Yet though so deeply realizing the truth of the Savior's words, "*Without me ye can do nothing*," she felt also that it would not be to the honor of his great name, should she not live in the enjoyment of that state of salvation in which she should be enabled to say, "*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*"

In reference to temptation, she learned from experience that the "disciple is not above his Master." She ever found that trials, well circumstanced in fiendish subtilty, beset her way. But by the increase of light that beamed upon her path as she entered the highway of holiness, she could now, with much stronger confidence, exclaim, "We are not ignorant of his de-

vices." The remembrance was sweetly encouraging to her soul, that the Savior was in all points tempted like as we are, yet *without sin*—and to know that she had the same weapons to contend with that the blessed Savior used when on earth; the same potent sword of the Spirit was the rejoicing of her heart.

Yet she did not find the "highway of holiness" a place for inglorious ease, but that it was indeed, as significantly implied in the Scriptural phrase, "A WAY," requiring, to her mind, by the peculiar construction of the expression, *interminable progression*!

And yet she loved to call it the "rest of faith," and joyously, as illustrative of her experience, said with the apostle, "For we which have believed do enter into rest." Yet she could not conceive of a rest sweeter to the follower of Jesus than to *do the will of God*.

The standard for Christian imitation she deemed set by inspiration—"Let that mind be in you that was in Christ." And the most conclusive way of coming at the knowledge of duty, a reference to the spirit and example of Christ. In conformity with these principles, it is not surprising that she should regard that state of soul that would constrain the disciple of Jesus to say, "The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up," as in any degree incompatible with the assurance of having entered into this state of rest; but regarded the proportion in which this conformity to Christ was realized, the amount of evidence of having entered into the *rest of faith*—"the way of holiness."

The standard of Christian excellence being thus fixed by the ratio of approximation to the image of Christ, wherever she saw the characteristics of his loveliness most clearly described, the more abundant was her love.

She well knew that in the present imperfect state of existence, where we necessarily know but in part, and where perfection can only exist in the gospel sense, which ordains that "*love be the fulfilling of the law*," that there is need for the constant exercise of that "charity that suffereth long and is kind;" and wherever she saw this spirit most sweetly exemplified by corresponding action, there was her heart most enduringly united; and though she was most endearingly attached to the division of Christ's body where from infancy she had been graciously cherished, yet the point of attraction was centered in the nearest resemblance to the image of the Savior; and where the most uniform exhibition of that mind that was in Christ, inducing conformity to his will, was recognized, her heart, with most endear-

ing emotion, exclaimed, "The same is my brother, my sister, my mother."

It was thus, from what she deemed the requirement and spirit of the blessed Bible, that a foundation was laid for a characteristic in her experience, which was a source of much satisfaction to herself and others; and she wondered not that one of blessed memory, while walking in this "highway," should exclaim, here

"Names, and sects, and parties fall,
And Christ alone is all in all."

The following communication on prayer was written by an able correspondent, with a design to promote, indirectly, the experience of holiness. We think the author has not miscalculated. Any person who reads the article will feel encouraged to pray. And the more we pray, the greater will be our attainments in Christian experience.

For the Guide to Christian Perfection.

EXCELLENCY OF PRAYER.

If our world had rolled on until this date in its present depravity, and that agony of moral woe which yet overspreads it; and if it had possessed a less perfect revelation, one which had afforded it a true knowledge of its lost condition and the awful character of God, but no notion of access to him by prayer, through the merit of an atonement; if it, at this moment, were in such a state,—trembling under the knowledge of God without daring to look up unto him, groping through a half illumined darkness, in which the realities of present wretchedness could be seen, but not the hopes of future relief;—what would be the effect of a proclamation made convincingly to the whole earth, say by an apparition of angels in the firmament, as over the plains of Bethlehem, that *on a given day God would hear prayer*, and that supplication offered on terms practicable to all, should procure any blessing truly proper to man, and should avail for the blessedness of the suppliant, even through everlasting ages? What amazement and exultation would such an event spread through the world! How would the hours and moments which were yet to precede that day be counted! How would the

friends of the sick, by the virtue of medicine and by tender cares, try to preserve the flickering existence, that the dying beloved one might pray before he departed, and the aged and despairing who have longed for the grave, seek to prolong their lives to the auspicious morning. Surely such a proclamation, under such circumstances, would be like the trump of the resurrection to the saints, and the emotions of mankind would be like those of the despairing lunatic, when some beautiful dream deludes his sleep, and mingles smiles and tears on his haggard countenance. Would any sleep the last night which was to precede it? And what a sight would the sun of that day witness in his course around the earth, of prostrate, joyous, imploring millions!

Such it is probable would be the effect of novelty in a privilege which, now, because it is always at our command, is reluctantly improved by many, and utterly rejected by most. How absurd as well as guilty is sin! How valuable, though unvalued, the privileges of the gospel! A lost spirit would give all worlds to be placed one hour in the probationary position of a living sinner; and if the hope of salvation were to be limited to one day, instead of being continued through years;—if, in other words, to-morrow were to be the judgment, the sun of this day would go down amidst the tears and prayers of the world.

Yet, independently of such illustrations, and depreciated as the privilege of prayer is by our desultory familiarity with it, to what mind does it not present itself as one of the most wonderful and precious institutions of religion!

Prayer is a salutary exercise. It is so, in the first place, because it is the *means* of the blessings prayed for. Faith is the condition of salvation; it is faith that is imputed for righteousness; yet prayer is the expression, the vehicle of faith; prayer is the wing on which faith rises to the mercy seat. The affirmation is as true in regard to prayer as it is in regard to faith, that no responsible sinner has ever been saved without it. God has not made it one of the conditions of salvation, yet it is an inseparable appliance to those conditions. Is it asked why prayer has been ordained as a means of blessings from God, when he knows our necessities before we ask, and when, also, earnest desire and suitable dispositions for the reception of the blessing may exist without being expressed? If there were no reasons obvious to us, yet we can believe there are to God; it may be, however, because he saw that, in the second place, the *disciplinary effect* of the institution would be salutary. "We find," says a distinguished writer, "from the whole course of nature, that God gov-

erns the world, not by independent acts, but by a connected system. The instruments which he employs in the ordinary works of his providence, are not physically necessary to his operations. He might have acted without them if he pleased. He might, for instance, have created all men without the intervention of parents; but where, then, had been the beneficial connections between parents and children, and the numerous advantages resulting to human society from such connections? The difficulty lies here: the *uses* arising from the *connections* of God's acts, may be various; and such are the pregnancies of his works, that a *single act* may answer a prodigious variety of purposes. Of these several purposes we are, for the most part, ignorant; and from this ignorance are derived most of our weak objections against the ways of his providence; whilst we foolishly presume that, like human agents, he has only *one* end in view." Now the effects of prayer, aside from its particular object, may be among "these several purposes." How can it fail to be thus salutary, when the first impression it gives the mind is that of dependence? If our spiritual blessings were matters of course, and not of condition, like the blessings of light, air or water, we would forget, as the world has in regard to the latter, the merciful agency of God in conferring them. Prayer, therefore, tends to humility. Gratitude likewise is produced by it in the same manner. There is no virtuous affection with which it is not congenial. It is serene, tranquillizing, spiritualizing. It cannot consist with sin. "Prayer will make us either cease sinning, or sin make us cease praying," says a certain author.

Prayer is a consolatory exercise. Man has a moral nature. His moral faculties are as distinguishable and as constitutional as his physical or intellectual. His most perfect happiness consists in the due gratification of all his faculties. But most of mankind limit this gratification to the physical nature. A few "of soul more elevate," add the pleasures of intellect. Yet the highest demand of our nature remains unanswered. The greatest monsters, not only of crime, but of misery, have been sensualists; and the highest intellectual powers have aided only in removing the deceptions of worldly pleasure, and overclouding the soul with disgust and despair, so that a philosopher has said that "a fool may, but a philosopher cannot be a happy man." Our moral wants are our largest and most urgent ones, and their neglect explains the existence of wretchedness amidst every other gratification,—in the palace as well as the hovel, with the sovereign and the sage, as well as the pauper and the slave. There is a higher gratification than that of sense, there is a higher exercise

than that of thought. It is the satisfaction of the conscience and the exercise of the heart. God made man for intercourse with himself; all other exercises and enjoyments were to be but secondary to this. Prayer is the means of this intercourse; its language is the converse of this communion.

But it is consolatory in a second sense; it is a source of aid and security. The supplicating accents of prayer are authoritative to command for our aid the very attributes of the Deity. Prayer is the eloquence that persuades God. What would be the consciousness of a man invested with the attributes of the Almighty—omniscience to discern every danger, omnipotence to avert it, and a capability of universal presence to exert every where his wisdom and power for his interests! How fearlessly would he throw himself on every emergency! How tranquilly walk through every peril! Now the Christian has not these attributes, but his God has, and that God pledges their interference for him, in answer to prayer, in every case where their interference will be for his interest; that is, in every case where the Christian would exercise them himself, were he possessed of them. He may, therefore, feel as secure as if the powers of the Godhead were at his command! Those powers may allow him to suffer, but no more than he himself would allow, if he had infinite wisdom to discern the propriety of such suffering. How sublime a spectacle is the praying man in this light! The stars may fall and the worlds pass away, but he is safe, for the power which dissolves them, supports him. A devout mind, constant in the habit of prayer, may acquire such a lively sense of the immediate presence and sympathy of God as to exult in the most trying danger, and be almost superior to even the instinctive fears of human nature.

Prayer is a sublime exercise. The reach of a mighty mind transcending the discoveries of ages, and evoking to view new principles or new worlds, is sublime. Newton's discoveries, pushing human comprehension higher in the series of natural causes and effects, were sublime. But there may be a progress remaining compared with which his discoveries are, as he said himself, like the bubble compared with the ocean. But prayer sweeps over all secondary causes, and lays hold on the first cause; it bends not its flight to repose its wing and refresh itself amidst the light of undiscovered worlds, but rises above stars and suns, until it bathes its pinions in the light of "the excellent glory." To control the tremendous force of the elements, and reduce them to the servility of mechanical operations, is a sublime achievement. Men can thereby float in palaces on seas, car-

as seemeth thee good. Make me useful. Place me in circumstances as may best suit the purposes of thy grace for the attainment of this object. Only let me labor in thy vineyard, and choose thou the time and place.

I would gratefully record the blessing of God on an endeavor for the conversion of a soul last week — Miss B——. I went, by the request of our pastor, to visit her sister, who had experienced religion at the altar the day but one previous. Both Mrs. B—— and her sister were strangers to me; but after having received a satisfactory account from Mrs. B—— of her conversion, I turned to her sister and asked if she did not desire a like blessing.

“I do not know that I ever felt the need of it,” she replied, in a very repulsive manner, and doubtless with the expectation of eluding all further attempts. Aware of the intention of her repulsive remarks and manner, and assured that she had been guilty of the awful sin of lying against the Holy Ghost, a holy boldness seemed to seize me, and with yearning of heart I began to set before her the awful nature of the sin she had just committed, by denying the work of the Spirit. “What,” said I, “never felt yourself a sinner, in need of a Savior, when God hath said that there is a light that enlighteneth every one that cometh into the world? It cannot be!” I felt that I was assisted by a power beyond myself while endeavoring to persuade and warn her to flee the wrath to come.

It was thus I endeavored to sow the seed, and left the event with God. The next evening she went forward for the prayers of God’s children, and last night she was brought most clearly into the light of his countenance. O my soul, magnify the Lord! My heart needed encouragement of this kind, in order to nerve it more firmly for future effort.

August 2.—By faith ye stand. This is hourly verified in my experience; for were it by positive demonstration from any of the grosser senses, the eye of faith had ere this been closed, and my soul left in a state of darkness to be felt.

O! shall I ever lose this blessing which I have lately gained, and which I still by faith retain? This blessing for which I have so long struggled? My heart recoils at the thought; yes, and my nature too, for it also partook of the living intensity with which it was sought. Blessed be God for ever, I feel that I need not lose it. My heavenly Father will not take it from me. He knows I could not answer the purpose for which his Son left his bosom in my behalf, without it.

That the enemy of all righteousness contends is not matter of surprise. It would be were it otherwise. But O! how much I

need to be filled with a knowledge of the will of God, with all wisdom and spiritual understanding, in order to be better able to withstand, and also to understand the wiles of my foe.

I feel that I do grow in the knowledge of my Savior, though not so fast as my expectations would have borne me. But my sufficiency is of thee, O Lord. I am thine—set apart—yes, sanctified to thy service: so say the breathings of my soul to my adorable Jesus.

Last night, the Lord my Redeemer condescended to take of the things of God and reveal them to me.

The enemy had been very powerfully suggesting throughout the day, and indeed much of the time since I received the blessing, has been spent in struggling against the temptation, that *I believe just because I will believe.*

This suggestion assumed more plausibility during our afternoon meeting, than at any other time. The beloved friends that attend this meeting, who have heard me so frequently speak of late of my earnest desires for this blessing, were waiting to rejoice in my joy, but so entirely by faith on the naked promises was I called to rely, that, were it not that I was fearful that Satan might have a victory, did I not speak, I should have said nothing. Every moment while I was endeavoring to give in my testimony, the suggestion was urged that I believed merely because I would believe. I now praise the Lord that he enabled me to bear up amid this tempest, and give, just as I resolved in defiance of Satan I would do, i. e., a simple narration of the manner in which God brought me into the enjoyment of this blessing.

When he found he could not drive me from my purpose of making confession, he continuously urged upon me, while speaking, that the cold matter-of-fact manner in which I made my statements, as if destitute of all feeling, would prevent the reception of my testimony. How well that I had previously counted the cost—resolved to believe God at all hazards.

I went to the evening meeting. Our dear brother S——— preached, but I scarcely heard a word. I had resolved to *die* in the struggle to believe rather than to give up my confidence, and it seemed as if the matter had now come to the climax. I felt, after wrestling some time, that the Lord permitted me to come near the throne, and in much simplicity of heart, even as a little child to a tender parent, make known my grievances.

I said, O Lord! thou knowest that I would not believe merely because I *will* believe, without having a proper foundation for my faith. And now, in condescension to my constitutional infirmities, my proneness to reason, O give me this blessing in

some such tangible form that the enemy of my soul may never be successful with the temptation that I believe merely because I will believe. Thou knowest that I would not believe without a proper foundation for my faith; and now let me have this blessing in some such *tangible* form that I may know the *precise* ground upon which I *obtained*, and also upon which I may *retain* it.

The answer came. New light burst upon my soul. The Holy Spirit took of the things of God, and revealed them unto me. It was by the unfolding of this passage to my understanding: "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable, which is your reasonable service."

I now saw that I had *obtained* this blessing by *laying all upon the altar*. I had *retained* it, by still *keeping* all upon the altar, "a *living* sacrifice." So long as it remained there, I perceived that both the faithfulness and the justice of God stood pledged for its *acceptance*. While kept upon this altar, it *must* be cleansed from all unrighteousness, for the blood of Jesus *cleanseth*; not that it *can* or *will*, at some *future* period, but *cleanseth now, just while the offering is presented*.

By this I saw that I could no more *believe* for the *future* moment, than I could *breathe* for the future, and perceived that I must be contented to *live by the moment*, and rely upon God to sustain me in spiritual existence, just as confidently as for sustenance in natural existence. So long as the offering was *kept upon the altar*, I saw it to be not only a privilege but a *duty* to believe.

I also saw that just so soon as I should begin to lean to my own understanding, feeling that I cannot do this or the other duty, just in the degree in which this is indulged in, the offering would be taken from off the altar, and I would have no *right to believe* the offering "holy and acceptable," inasmuch as it is not such an offering as God has declared acceptable by the voice of the written word.

The infinitely efficacious blood was represented as ever flowing. And it is thus that the soul, laid upon the altar, is *cleansed* and *kept clean*.

O my soul, mayest thou ever remain upon the altar of sacrifice, and Thou, my strength and righteousness, forbid that any unhalloved act should ever cause its removal. It is by thy power alone, O God, that I am kept. Here shall I ever feel the cleansing efficacy. Here shall my soul fill and expand—fill and expand, till it shall burst its tenement, and faith shall be lost in sight.

LOVE SUPERIOR TO FAITH.

Very excellent things are spoken of faith, and whosoever is a partaker thereof may well say with the apostle, "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift." Yet still it loses all its excellence when brought into comparison with love. What St. Paul observes concerning the superior glory of the gospel above that of the law, may with great propriety be spoken of the superior glory of love above that of faith: "Even that which was made glorious hath no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away is glorious, much more doth that which remaineth exceed in glory." Yea, all the glory of faith, before it is done away, arises hence, that it ministers to love. It is the great temporary means which God hath ordained to promote that eternal end.

Let those who magnify faith beyond all proportion, so as to swallow up all things else, and who so totally misapprehend the nature of it as to imagine it stands in the place of love, consider farther, that as love will exist after faith, so it did exist long before it. The angels, who from the moment of their creation beheld the face of their Father that is in heaven, had no occasion for faith, in its general notion, as it is the evidence of things not seen. Neither had they need of faith, in its particular acceptance: faith in the blood of Jesus: for he took not upon him the nature of angels, but only the seed of Abraham. There was, therefore, no place before the foundation of the world for faith either in the general or particular sense. But there was for love. Love existed from eternity, in God, the great ocean of love. Love had a place in all the children of God, from the moment of their creation. They received at once from their gracious Creator, to exist and to love.

Nor is it certain (as ingeniously and plausibly as many have descanted upon this) that faith, even in the general sense of the word, had any place in paradise. It is highly probable, from that short and circumstantial account which we have in holy writ, that Adam, before he rebelled against God, walked with him by sight, and not by faith:—

"For then his reason's eye was strong and clear,
And as an eagle can behold the sun,
Might have beheld his Maker's face as near,
As the intellectual angels could have done."

He was then able to talk with him face to face, whose face we cannot now see and live; and consequently had no need of that faith whose office it is to supply the want of sight.

On the other hand, it is absolutely certain, faith in its particular sense had then no place. For in that sense it necessarily presupposes sin, and the wrath of God declared against the sinner: without which there is no need of an atonement for sin, in order to the sinner's reconciliation with God. Consequently, as there was no need of an atonement before the fall, so there was no place for faith in that atonement; man being then pure from every stain of sin, holy as God is holy. But love even then filled his heart. It reigned in him without a rival. And it was only when love was lost by sin, that faith was added, not for its own sake, nor with any design that it should exist any longer than until it had answered the end for which it was ordained, namely, to restore man to the love from which he was fallen. At the fall, therefore, was added this evidence of things not seen, which before was utterly needless: this confidence in redeeming love, which could not possibly have any place till the promise was made, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head.

Faith then was originally designed of God, to re-establish the law of love. Therefore in speaking thus, we are not undervaluing it, or robbing it of its due praise: but on the contrary showing its real worth, exalting it in its just proportion, and giving it that very place which the wisdom of God assigned it from the beginning. It is the grand means of restoring that holy love wherein man was originally created. It follows, that although faith is of no value in itself, (as neither is any other means whatsoever,) yet as it leads to that end, the establishing anew the law of love in our hearts, and as, in the present state of things, it is the only means under heaven for effecting it, it is, on that account, an unspeakable blessing to man, and of unspeakable value before God.—*Wesley.*

In using all means, seek God alone. In and through every outward thing, look singly to the power of his Spirit, and the merits of his Son. Beware you do not stick in the work itself: if you do, it is all lost labor. Nothing short of God can satisfy your soul. Therefore eye him, in all, through all, and above all. Remember also to use all means as means: as ordained, not for their own sake, but in order to the renewal of your soul in righteousness and true holiness.—*Wesley.*